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DILYS

AN INDIAN ROMANCE

BY

F. E. PENNY

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROMANCE OF A NAUTCH GIRL," "THE FOREST OFFICER,"

"A MIXED MARRIAGE," "THE SANYSAL," ETC.

Copyright, 1905

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BUFFALO, N. Y.

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DILYS

CHAPTER I.

The train drew up in a cloud of dust. Doors were swung open, and streams of brown-skinned travellers poured from the stifling third-class carriages upon the platform.

From a Pullman car Owen Davenport descended with a deliberation that was habitual. He glanced up the platform, and an expression of pleasure came over his face as his eye caught sight of a tall, spare figure clothed in kharkee. It was the police officer of the district, Rex Carwardine, an old schoolfellow and friend of the new arrival. Rex pushed his way through the shouting, gesticulating crowd with good-humoured authority, and the people fell back with hasty deference before "the big Polliss master," as they called him.

"Hallo! Owen, old man!" he exclaimed, as he gripped the other by the hand.

After an exchange of greetings came the business of collecting the luggage. It was not until the two men were seated in the strange-hooded, two-wheeled vehicle, known to Rex's household

as the district cart, that they were able to hold any conversation.

"It is good of you to pay me a visit like this. Next best to going home is to get an old friend from home to come and stay with one."

Owen smiled as he glanced at the sunburnt face with its clear, grey eyes. Rex had no pretensions to good looks, yet the feminine eye lingered with something like approval upon his features, and men gave him their confidence uninvited.

"I hate wearing virtues that don't belong to me. They make me feel uncomfortable, like other men's clothes. To be honest, I proposed paying you this visit more in my own interests than yours."

Rex laughed outright. "The same old Owen!" he cried, with keen enjoyment at the close touch of far away schooldays. "I remember how you used to say the most outrageous things at Rugby with that saving preface 'to be honest.' We couldn't punch your head for being rude because you claimed such virtue in speaking honestly. Well, what is it?"

There was a slight pause before the reply came.

"An heiress."

"A what?" shouted Rex, bringing his eyes from the country-bred mare to his friend's fair, Saxon face.

"A real bona fide heiress."

"We don't grow them in these parts," said the police officer, flicking the mare with his whip as

she suddenly checked her smooth trot at sight of a village pig by the roadside.

"Oh yes, you do. I have all the details at my fingers' ends. I may as well tell you at once that she is here—here, in Cuddalore, to the best of my belief, and that I am here to find her and——" he paused, leaving the sentence unfinished.

"Yes, and what else?"

"To be honest——" A laugh from his friend caused him to hesitate. What he was about to tell was not quite fair upon himself, yet there was just enough truth in it to impel a man of his nature to say it. He finished with a jerk "—and to marry her."

"Oh!" And again the eye of the policeman swept the features of his guest.

They were crossing the river, a narrow ribbon of dazzling blue upon a bed of golden sand.

"Pull up a minute, and let me have a look at the country," said Owen.

The river ran eastward to the sea, which was not more than a mile away. Its banks were flat, and where the tides and storm-waves did not reach, they were covered with palm-groves and giant grasses. In a cold, grey atmosphere the scene would have been dreary and depressing; but under the tropical light of a South Indian sun, the landscape was full of colour. The newcomer gazed across the yellow sands at the gleaming water and azure sky until he was well-nigh blinded.

"Over there is the old ruined Fort," said Rex, pointing to the right with his whip.

"Uninhabited in the present day, I presume?"

"Except for myself. My house is built on the earthworks overlooking the river. It is a little way from the cantonment, and has a reputation for fever which it does not deserve. It suits me in more ways than one."

They passed over the bridge, and drove on under the shade of noble trees. Between the cantonment and the sea stretched an open maidan. It was dotted with white tents.

"Troops, I see," remarked Owen. "Are they English or native?"

"English; they have been sent here from Bangalore to get them out of the way of plague. The commandant is a nice fellow, pleasant and sociable. But I say, Owen, what about this heiress? Is she native or Eurasian?"

"Neither; she is English as far as birth is concerned, and as pure-blooded as I am. It is a most romantic story."

"We will have it when we get in"

They left the white tents behind, crossed a swampy watercourse, and passed along a smooth carriage drive between some low mounds, where here and there a piece of broken masonry crumbled half hidden under rank herbage. The bungalow, embowered in trees, looked out upon the still waters of the lagoon. A quarter of a mile away

the sea broke monotonously upon a sandy shore, that was peculiarly desolate and deserted. Owen looked round as he climbed down from the dog-cart.

"Where is the Fort?"

"Gone long ago, as far as keep and drawbridge are concerned. All that remains of Fort St. David are these earthworks that you see about the place. Lally's guns knocked the Fort into a cocked hat nearly a century and a half ago. But come along inside; you must be dying for a drink after the heat and glare."

It was refreshingly cool within the walls of the bungalow. Curtains of Indian muslin swung to and fro in the moist breeze that blew in from the sea, and there was no need of punkah. Doors and windows opened on to deep verandas that stretched out into the shade of the long-armed bayan-trees. A shrubbery of crotons and panax bushes nestled close up to the walls of the house, providing a wealth of colour with their gold and crimson foliage and soft, feathery green. The sea-breeze brought on its wings the boom of the sea, with occasionally the plaintive cry of a water-bird. A sigh of contentment escaped Owen's lips as he put down his glass.

"You must amuse yourself till dinner. I have a lot of work to do," said his host, as he left the room for the office.

Dinner was over, and the servants had departed

to take their own meal at the back of the house. Owen, extended at full length upon a grass-hopper couch in the verandah, lighted his cigarette in leisurely fashion. His story was yet untold. One thing at a time, was his rule in life. In some respects it was a good rule; it ensured the thorough performance of the task of the moment. But there were occasions when the attention had to be divided, when the grasp had to be right and left, or the opportunity was lost for ever. On these occasions Owen failed where a man of greater readiness would have succeeded. Being possessed of private means, his failures were of no consequence, except so far as his pride was concerned.

"Now about this heiress. I will tell you her story, and then you must give me your help and advice."

"In my official capacity or as a friend?"

"Wait till you have heard what I have to say."

This was the story which he told. There was a Cornishman named Tregethin. He was the younger son of a younger son, and had to work for his living. Mining was the profession that he chose, and, when his training was finished, he was tempted to accept the offer of employment in a new mine which was being opened up in the Wynaad in South India. He knew nothing about Wynaad, except what the prospectus of the new mine could tell him. By diligent inquiry he further learned that it was a district in which

coffee grew; that the climate was cool and pleasant, though apt to be feverish at certain seasons. The salary was handsome, and for the present he was to be manager and chief engineer. Under the circumstances Tregethin felt justified in marrying the girl of his choice before he sailed.

The young bride, full of hope and happiness, was charmed with all she saw. Life in camp on the wild hills delighted her. The tropical forest with its wealth of vegetation, the birds and butterflies, and the strange people who gathered round the camp never ceased to interest her. Added to this there was the new bungalow which was being built under her eyes, and which bid fair to become as pretty a house as the feminine heart could desire. It was surrounded by a garden, with a wonderful virgin soil that grew flowers and vegetables as if by magic.

"Captain" Tregethin, as he called himself, after the manner of mining managers, was not quite so well satisfied with his department. The mine which looked so well in the prospectus, was in its earliest infancy of shaft-sinking and shed-building. He and his wife were the only Europeans. The rest of his staff consisted of a Eurasian clerk or two, a dozen native maistries, and a couple of hundred coolies. He threw himself into his work, determined that it should not be his fault if it failed. And he wrote frequently to Bombay, urging the more speedy despatch of machinery and

plant. The delays were not to be accounted for by the difficulties of transport, and there came periods when, for want of the necessary machinery, he found it impossible to keep his coolies employed.

Time passed, and Mrs. Tregethin, established comfortably in her new house, was happy enough in the prospect of motherhood. There was no doctor within reach, but this did not trouble her nor the busy husband. Attended only by the native apothecary and the ayah, she became the mother of a daughter, whom Tregethin baptized himself under the name of Dilys. For a week all seemed to be going well with mother and child. Then fever suddenly set in, and a fortnight later a broken-hearted husband buried his wife amongst the Persian roses in the garden.

Just at that time some long-expected machinery arrived, and Tregethin was obliged to be at the works all day. He had no time to listen to the complaints of the ayah, who wailed over the pining infant, crying that it would die if a foster-mother was not found for it. There were no native villages nor bazaars within reach—nothing but the mining camp of workers, and though it contained a few women, none of them happened to be qualified for the duties of foster-mother.

The machinery had been brought up by a gang of Lumbadees. They are the gipsies of India, and are also known as Brinjarees. They are a wandering tribe, who do transport work among the hills

where there are no roads. Their sturdy little bullocks possess something of the nature of goats in their power of climbing. They pass along wild hill paths and through forests, where the way is nothing but a game track. In the swampy valleys they pick out with unerring instinct a firm footway over the spongy ground. The Lumbadees are great thieves, yet they possess some strange traits of honesty. The fidelity with which they keep their word is a matter of history, and they are scrupulously honest over all goods committed to their charge. They possess a breed of dogs of a sandy or grey colour. The dogs have shaggy coats, and are larger in size than the old-fashioned English sheep dogs. They are not kept by any other caste; like the poligars' animals, though faithful to death to their own masters, they are too ready to fight, and are treacherous and savage towards strangers.

Amongst the gang of gipsies that brought up the machinery was a young woman who had just lost her baby. The ayah, with the maternal instincts of her race, endeavoured to secure her services. She made the woman a handsome offer of clothes and money to take the situation of amah, and reside at the bungalow for a year. But nothing would induce the gipsy woman to approach the residence of an Englishman. Her husband, she vowed, would kill her if she entered the house. The ayah solved the difficulty by carrying the child to the Lumbadee's camp. The foster-mother

took to the little one with all the love that should have been bestowed upon her own. She even gained courage sufficiently to meet the ayah near the house at stated times. Late at night, early in the morning before the cuckoos and barbets had begun to call, the foster-mother was waiting for her charge. But never once did she venture under the roof of the Englishman. Ten days later, when the bullocks were rested, the Lumbadees began to stir. They were anxious to depart, and the foster-mother must needs go with them.

The ayah was in despair; she offered money and jewels; she begged, coaxed and threatened, but all in vain. Her husband would not hear of it. The woman would have stayed, for she had grown fond of the fair-skinned, smiling baby; but the tribe backed her husband's decree and made it inexorable. The evening before the departure of the gipsies the ayah and the woman had a long and earnest talk. Afterwards the ayah sought her master.

"Sir, the Lumbadee woman will not stay."

"Have you promised money and jewels?"

"Yes, sir, and she would accept them if she could, for she loves the little one; but her people say no."

"Then, what are we to do?" asked the forlorn widower, utterly at a loss to know what course to pursue. The milk of the cows fed upon the rank herbage of the hills would be poison to his tiny daughter.

The ayah looked at him with swimming eyes. "Sir, the baby will die if she loses the Lumbadee mother."

"I know that," he replied, irritably.

"But the Lumbadee mother, though she is obliged to go, will continue to give her services if master will let baby go too."

"With the Lumbadees?" he almost shouted in his astonishment.

"It is the only way. And what harm can come if I go with the child? The woman promises faithfully that she will take care of me and the baby, and we will come back in eighteen months with the little missie, a strong, English child."

So the ayah pleaded, whilst the distracted father listened. Gradually she conquered his scruples, and wrung from him a consent given against his better judgment. Poor man! It seemed to him that a cruel fate had left him no choice. It was that, or pronouncing the death-warrant of his child.

The gipsies departed with their picturesque string of bullocks; one animal was loaded with the clothes so carefully prepared by the fingers now lying stiff and cold in the grave under the rose bushes in the garden. Tregethin watched the party with a heavy heart as men and cattle trailed over the hills, dipping into the moist still valleys, climbing by winding paths over the crests of the breezy hills, till the last bright, blue cloth and yellow string of cowries was lost in the distant jungle.

CHAPTER II.

Davenport having arrived at this point of his story, relapsed into silence as though the tale was ended. Rex handed him the box of cigars and called to his servant to bring soda-water and ice. The sea-breeze blew fresh and cool through the verandah rustling the leaves of the crotons. The flying-foxes quarrelled greedily over the figs on the banyan trees, and from the camp on the maidan came the sound of the distant bugle.

"Well, and has this child turned out to be an heiress?"

"Yes; a mortality in the Tregethin family during the last few years has left her the sole survivor of her generation."

"And now you want to find her?"

"That's it."

"If she is alive."

"Oh, she is alive all right," replied Owen, as he gave his undivided attention to the lighting of his cigar, and then proceeded to superintend the mixing of a whisky and soda. Rex waited, knowing of old that his friend was not to be hurried. "Yes, she exists right enough. Tregethin had a sister younger than himself, with whom he corresponded at long intervals. He told her of the birth of the

child and the subsequent death of the mother. He added that the baby had been put out to nurse, with the ayah to look after it, and that the foster-mother was a gipsy woman. Then followed a long silence at the end of which she learned that her brother was dead. She wrote to the secretary of the closed mine, asking for information about the child, but could get none. A few years later she married. Her husband was the owner of a coffee estate in Mysore; and chance thus brought her to India and to a district adjoining that in which Tregethin had laboured. No sooner had she arrived than she renewed her inquiries, visiting the hospital where he died, interviewing doctor and nurse, questioning them closely as to his last hours and supposed delirious statements. Then she made a pilgrimage to the mine. The camp was not easy to find, for the jungle had grown to the roofs of the sheds. White ants and rust had been busy in the bungalow and the place was enmeshed with creepers; not a human soul had visited it for years. The wild pigs and monkeys were in undisturbed possession and seemed likely to remain so.

"She didn't succeed, then, in finding the child?" asked Rex.

"Mrs. Myrtle was a woman of perseverance. She went back to her husband's estate nothing daunted, and set her woman's wit to work. With the help of her ayah as interpreter, she questioned every cooly that set foot upon the estate. From

a West-coast man she heard of a tribe of gipsies who had with them a fair-skinned child supposed to be a Mahratta or Tyar foundling. These Lumbadees had gone north into the Konkanees country, said the cooly, because of some trouble with the police over the smuggling of sandalwood from Mysore to the West coast."

"Those gipsy fellows are born smugglers. I have something to do with them myself between here and Pondicherry, smuggling French brandy and perfumes," said Rex, who was deeply interested.

"Are there any of the tribe here now?" asked Davenport.

"I saw some with a string of bullocks carrying ground-nuts only yesterday. The French ship the nuts—roots they ought to be called—to the continent to help in the manufacture of salad oil."

"The Lumbadees were not altogether strangers to the coffee-planter, and at the very first appearance on the estate of their blue cloths and cowrie ornaments, Mrs. Myrtle got speech with them. They consented to be the bearers of a message, should they ever meet any members of the tribe that possessed the so-called Tyar child. The message was simple but to the point. 'Foster-mother of the Englishman's daughter, keep faith with the father and bring his child to the Chief Magistrate of Mysore city.'"

"She should have put in into the hands of the police," said Rex.

"On the contrary, it was the police whom the Lumbadees were endeavouring to avoid; and her method proved successful. One day the Brahmin magistrate saw a Lumbadee child of about seven years of age standing in his verandah. She talked a strange mixture of gipsy language, Tamil and Malayalum. It was Dilys Tregethin. The Lumbadees had brought her back true to their trust; but they took care not to show themselves, for they still feared that the police might make it disagreeable for the gang."

"How could Mrs. Myrtle identify her?" asked the police officer.

"The gipsies returned with the child some remnants of European clothing and a small gold locket containing a photograph of Tregethin. This trinket the ayah had hung around the baby's neck soon after the mother's death, and it was carefully preserved, probably under the impression that it was a charm of some kind. Mrs. Myrtle was perfectly satisfied that it was her brother's long-lost daughter. Having no children of her own she took Dilys to her heart at once."

"She must have been a strange little creature to be suddenly admitted into a well-ordered English household. How did Miss Tregethin take to the new life?"

"She soon settled down and learned to wear English clothing, to eat her food like a civilized being and to speak in her mother tongue. When

she was ten years old Mrs. Myrtle sent her to the nuns at Pondicherry to be educated under French governess, and she spent her holidays on the estate; very happy times they were, too, according to poor Mrs. Myrtle's account."

"Apparently you have found your heiress and she is safely sheltered under the wing of a motherly relative," remarked Rex.

"My tale is not quite finished," replied his deliberate friend. "At the age of seventeen she left school with a knowledge of French and English as well as the native tongues of her childhood, which, living in India as she did, she never lost. Six months after she went to live with the Myrtles' she became heiress to a considerable sum of money, her aunt having a life interest in part of it. Now this is the curious part of my story. On coming into this property the Myrtles' decided to sell their estate in Mysore and to retire to England, taking Miss Tregethin with them.

CHAPTER III.

The town of Cuddalore on the Coromandel coast is a little more than a hundred miles south of Madras. The district of Arcot in which it stands is mostly flat, producing grain, indigo, sugar-cane and ground-nuts. An old trunk road from north to south passes through the cantonment and town, running parallel with the railway. The scenery has a charm of its own. Avenues of hoary old trees, stretches of emerald rice-fields, gleaming sheets of water, villages, palm-groves and casuarina plantations, with here and there uncultivated patches of rock and cactus, vary the landscape. The tropical sun steeps everything in rich colours, rosy at morn, golden at noon, and purple at sunset. Between the old town and the cantonment runs the Gudalam river, a thread of blue in the dry weather, and a raging torrent of brown, muddy water in the rains.

The Europeans employed in the service of Government live in the cantonment on the north side of the river. The old town on the south side is the abode of the native population. In addition to the Hindoos and Mahomedans, there is a little colony of Europeans and Eurasians. The Englishmen are mostly old soldiers who have taken

their pensions and have elected to spend the rest of their lives in the country. The attraction is usually a native or Eurasian wife together with a natural liking for the luxuries of the tropics, a plentiful supply of cheap food and liquor, and cheap servants and house rent. The poorest European or Eurasian can obtain the services of a kitchen servant in return for his food.

John Brand and Ben Bullen were two pensioners who had adopted this course. They served the Company and afterwards the Queen for many years in the same regiment. Bullen belonged to Suffolk, and the accent of the Eastern counties still hung about his speech, especially in moments of excitement. He had married a native woman who made him an excellent wife, and had borne him a large family.

Brand was bred and born in London, a townsman to the tip of his fingers. In days gone by he had been the smartest sergeant in the regiment. There promotion stopped, for Brand had a little weakness which militated against his advancement in life. To use his own expression, he was occasionally "overtaken." It did not happen often, but when it did, he was noisy and troublesome; and though his servant did his best to screen his master, the truth leaked out, and Brand climbed the regimental ladder no higher.

Bullen and Brand formed a friendship which proved to be life-long. They banded together

with four others and shared the services of a native servant whom they called Rammersammy, shortened sometimes to Sammy. He cleaned their accoutrements, and waited on them "just as if they were lords," to quote their own words, and all for the sum of six rupees a month. Ramaswamy attached himself especially to Brand, who undertook to train him. It was admitted by all his comrades that Brand knew better than any of them how a gentleman's servant should behave, having occupied that position himself before he joined the ranks. No one could accuse him of shirking his task; he spared no pains in teaching Ramaswamy how to brush, clean, and polish, how to fold and put away clothes, and how to lay them out ready for use. Like all native servants, the man was flattered by the unremitting attention and interest shown in his work. He rose to the occasion, and took as great a pride in his success as was evinced by his instructor. He became the smartest "boy" in the barracks, and was the envy of all the other syndicates of masters. If there was one thing in which he excelled above all others, it was in his manner and mode of address. Brand managed to instil into him something of the quiet alertness of a first-class valet, who anticipates without obtrusiveness his master's wants. And he taught him to use the honorific "sir" freely. It became "sar" in Ramaswamy's mouth, and the sound of it was music in the ears of his masters.

When, in the course of years, one by one of his employers departed, Bullen to be married, and the others with the regiment to England, Ramaswamy remained contentedly with Brand, following him into private life. Wages were at first scantily and irregularly paid, but in addition to the bond of attachment between master and man, there were compensations which made life worth living to the servant grown old in his master's service.

Brand's favourite pursuit was fishing in the Gudalam. The old man might often be seen wending his way to the river, wearing shirt and trousers and a pith hat. His feet were bare, and he carried a large creel slung across his shoulders after the fashion of all enthusiastic anglers. Fishing-rods and a box of bait completed his outfit.

When he went to ask for his mail letters at the post-office on the arrival of the English mail, letters which never came; or when he walked to the Kutchery to receive his pension, his appearance was very different; for Brand was a dandy in his way. On retirement from the service in place of the smart uniform of his sovereign, he adopted a neat suit of white duck, which was as becoming to his dapper little figure as the white drill regulation jacket. The same care was observed in making his toilette as when he dressed for parade. A spotless shirt and collar, a clean

suit, and a satin tie were laid out by the careful Ramaswamy, who helped his master into them when the barber had finished his work. The brown canvas shoes were neatly tied; a gold signet ring and a silver-topped cane, produced from some secret hiding-place known only to Ramaswamy, completed the costume, which in Bullen's eyes at least made Brand "quite the gentleman."

Having made his toilette, Brand seated himself on a chair in the verandah, and waited until Ramaswamy had assumed a blue cotton coat, a turban of white muslin, and some stiff starched drapery falling in giant folds round his thin old legs. As he emerged from the smoky den at the back of the house, which served as kitchen and dwelling, Brand usually greeted him with the query, "Made yourself quite clean like a gentleman's servant?"

"Yes, sar."

"Then come along, boy." And they started for the Kutchery, followed by the admiring eyes of the town's-people, who thought Mr. "Berrand," as they called him, as great a personage as the Government officer himself. The Englishman walked in front, whilst his servant trotted at a respectful distance behind, keeping sufficiently near to be able to hear his master should he desire to hold any conversation. At the Kutchery he found Bullen, who had come on the same errand.

The two pensioners were well known to Mr. Hensley. He had a liking for them both, and seldom let them go without having a chat. Brand did most of the talking, whilst Bullen listened in admiration of his friend's powers of conversation so far exceeding his own. After signing the receipt, the money was handed to them. Bullen put his into his trousers-pocket in true British style; but Brand, with a lofty gesture, handed the cash to his servant, and then stood at attention in his best regimental manner to hear Mr. Hensley's remarks. Every pay-day the same little scene was enacted with variations according to the time at the disposal of the collector. The topics discussed were the old regimental days, the wickedness of the natives with the general degeneracy of the times, and the increasing impudence of the Hindoos.

CHAPTER IV.

It was mail day—that is to say, the day on which the weekly English mail was expected. Delivery by the native postman, known as the post-peon, was slow and uncertain. When there was a heavy bag, he used his own judgment in the distribution of it. Having delivered the usual quantity of letters, he was apt to retain the surplus for the next day's round. The English residents of Cuddalore preferred to send their own peons for their letters. Other inhabitants, native as well as Eurasian, who did not possess peons, went in person if they had reason to think that any of their friends had been writing. But the native of India is not addicted to correspondence other than what is necessary to business, and the towns-people of Cuddalore had little business that required the assistance of the post.

On the arrival of the English mail following that which brought Owen Davenport, the customary group gathered round the post-office waiting for the letters to be given out. The belted servants of the judge, the collector, and other 'civilians, each bearing a leather post-bag, were seated under the shade of the tamarind tree, leaving the verandah of the post-office bungalow to the Europeans and Eurasians.

"We have visitors," announced Babajee, Mr. Hensley's servant.

"Sent on to your master from Madras by Government?" asked the judge's peon.

"Not this time; they are friends of the Missie. They travelled out on the same ship with her, and being pleasant gentlemen, the Missie asked them to visit her father."

"Perhaps she has chosen one for her husband, instead of the Poliss officer?"

"Babajee shook his head negatively. "The Missie laughs too much to be thinking of marriage. She is always making fun. Only yesterday, she turned the laughter of the house against the cook. Even the master smiled when he heard the tale. The cook is a good man, and pleases the master with his dishes. But when all his work is done, he likes his arrack and his pipe as we do."

His listeners wagged their heads in unanimous approval of the sentiment.

"Last evening, after dinner was finished, the visitors, who are strange men with unEnglish ways, asked if they might have some hot soup at midnight. The Missie took a tin from the store-room and went herself to the kitchen to tell the cook how to warm the soup. By that time he had smoked his pipe, and drunk his arrack. It was not to be supposed that he could understand what the Missie said. She called the ayah. 'What is this?' she asked. That owl of a woman, instead of reply-

ing that he was sick with fever, told the Missie that he had been drinking arrack. It was foolish of the cook to deny the woman milk for her coffee."

"Was the Missie angry?"

A broad grin illumined the face of Babajee as he continued—

"Our Missie is never angry. She made fun only. She called me and Marava, and directed us to take the cook to the Pound, together with his mat and blanket, and he slept the night there; the Pound peon having orders not to let him depart until he should pay the fee of a donkey. His wife took the money this morning, and the cook goes about with a ball of fire in his belly. He will not take his ease again for the future until the Missie is safe in bed."

"Why did the strange gentlemen require hot

"They are poochee-catchers. They catch beetles and flies of all sorts; flower-flies, fruit-flies, even loathsome creeping-flies and worms, which they shut in boxes and send to Germany. After dinner, they go forth with muslin bags and lanterns. The flies come towards the light and get entangled in the waving bags. Then they come home and require soup and beer."

"What is the meaning of this madness?"

"Henri, their Pondicherry butler, says that it is done by order of the German Emperor. The flower-flies are to adorn the walls of his daughter's bridal chamber; the loathsome flies and worms are for the manufacture of spells and potions against the enemies of the Emperor."

"Shuh!" said a voice behind them. They turned to see Naga, the police peon, who held the coveted post of messenger in Carwardine's office. He had come up in time to hear the last sentence or two.

"Ho! Naga, you are late this morning."

"So is the mail," replied the young man. His dark blue uniform, and neat turban to match, gave him a smart military appearance, of which he was fully conscious; but his pride was literally in his boots. He, only, of all the peons in the cantonment, wore boots. They were large and of heavy regulation make, and they creaked like a cavalry saddle. Naga gloried in their music, which, by an elaborate bending of the foot, he developed to its fullest extent.

"Where is your post-bag?"

"The master is calling for the letters himself this morning."

"Wherefore?" asked three or four of the men at once.

"I know not, so I came to see. He sent me with a note to the Collector's Missie, and I am on my way back. He is dining to-night at your house," he concluded, addressing himself to Babajee.

"Then he will see the poochee-catchers."

"Shuh! they are not only catchers of poochees."

"Then what are they if not?" Surely all day and half the night they hunt for flies."

"There are other things to be found besides flies," said Naga, mysteriously.

"What?" eagerly chorused his hearers.

But the young man would not commit himself.

"That is our business," he replied. "My master has orders to watch them."

"Was the order given by Government?"

"It came by telegraph."

"No such order has been sent through the telegraph, or we should have heard of it from Naraswamy. He writes the messages as the clerk reads them off the machine."

"You know nothing of what goes on in our office," said Naga, contemptuously. "Let every man mind his own works and see to the weeds in his own garden. The telegrams which my master receives tell the world one thing, but speak to him of other matters. Three mornings ago came a wire from the Commissioner of Police, Madras. The words were "two nineteen." The master read it, tore it in pieces, and threw it in the waste-paper basket where we found it. It was only necessary to watch what was done that day to discover the meaning of the message. As soon as my father, the head constable, came to the office, he talked with him in a low voice. Later, I saw my father, with two of his men who were without uniform, go towards the Garden house. He spoke to Abdul, the butler, and the men remained to work in the garden and help the tent lascars. Shuh! What does all this mean but that the police officer has orders to watch the catchers of poochees, and

report what they do and how they pass their time night and day."

A circle of natives had gathered round the peons, and were listening with absorbing interest to the conversation. Amongst them was Ramaswamy, whose master in full dress had arrived at the post-office to inquire for letters. The blue-coated figure took a step forward and asked—

"Where have they come from?"

"They say they are from Bombay, but their luggage bears railway labels of Lahore, Rangoon, and Pondicherry."

"The world contains but one liar, and that is the human tongue. Their boxes tell truer words than their speech," cried Naga, with a laugh, in which the assembly joined.

CHAPTER V.

The old ruined fort at Cuddalore is a relic of the past. Before the English obtained a foothold upon the Coromandel coast, a rich Hindoo merchant fixed upon the spot where it stands for the erection of his warehouses. He threw up earthworks to protect himself from robbers, and mounted some cannon upon the rude fortifications to keep the marauding horsemen of the Mahrattas at a distance. His country ships came over the river bar with merchandise from the Ganges, from Siam, from Ceylon, and even from China and Persia. The goods were sent inland by the aid of the Brinjarees, and a lucrative market was found on the plateau of Mysore.

Then came the Dutch and English merchantsh disputing, with commercial jealousy, each other's right to be there. The Hindoo merchant's descendants, alarmed at the approach of fresh hordes of Mahrattas on the land side, and of a strange white people from the sea, packed up their wealths of gold and jewels accumulated by their father and departed South, where they would be secure from foreign traders and inland thieves.

When the English merchants asked, at the end of the seventeenth century, for a domicile in

Cuddalore, the reigning Rajah offered them the deserted fort. They readily agreed to pay the sum demanded, in exchange for which they were to have the ruined warehouses and fortifications which surrounded them, together with as much land as could be covered by "random" cannon-balls fired from the ramparts.

The chief gunner, with his guns of longest range, was sent over from Fort St. George, Madras, and was directed by the shrewd old merchants of the East India Company to enclose as much land as possible with his "random shot." The shot were marked down and the boundary line drawn. The villages thus enclosed are still known as the "Cannon-ball villages."

The fort was repaired and strengthened. Warehouses and dwellings were rebuilt. Quarters for a garrison were erected, and a market was opened for the products of the district. Its walls echoed to the sound of the bugle, the hum of busy voices the chant of stalwart porters, and the grunt of the transport bullocks belonging to the gipsies.

On the coast between Cuddalore and Madras lies the French settlement of Pondicherry. The eyes of the French merchants turned greedily upon the prosperous English traders; Dupleix, the ambitious Governor of Pondicherry, dreamed dreams of greatness, which at one period seemed likely to be realized. At his bidding Lally, with his troops, appeared before Cuddalore in 1758, and took the town and the fort.

Before the end of the eighteenth century Fort St. David was so damaged by the varying fortunes of war, that it was considered beyond repair; and the twentieth century finds it a mere mass of ruins, partially hidden under rank vegetation. The earthworks remain with their old casemates and bomb-proof rooms. Subterranean ways run completely round the fort under these earthworks. At short intervals galleries, which formerly led to powder-chambers, branch off from the encircling passages. It would require a bold man indeed to penetrate their unilluminated depths. Here and there the masonry has fallen, blocking the way; but it forms no impediment to the present inhabitants, the snakes, rats, scorpions, bats, lizards and centipedes, that have the tunnels all to themselves.

The only bungalow built upon this once busy spot was occupied by Rex Carwardine. It stood upon the south-east bastion, facing the river. Trees of a century and a half old clustered round it, and a wild tangled garden of flowering shrubs and plants stretched from the very walls of the house down to the rank marshy growth that bordered the river. The carriage-drive passed out on the north side, where there had formerly been a massive gate and guard-room.

As Rex and Owen drove through the opening to reach the road on their way to Soobarow's house, they passed the two pensioners, who were

turning into the fort. The figure of Brand in his fishing costume was familiar enough to the police officer, who frequently caught sight of him strolling about with his bundle of fishing-rods on the banks of the river below the garden, or upon the opposite shore where the cocoa-nut palms fringed the water. He was usually accompanied by his servant, who carried a large basket on his head to hold the fish. To-day Brand had made no change in his dress. Both he and Bullen wore the same suit, in which they had called at the post-office a couple of hours earlier.

Rex pulled up with an inquiring glance. "Were you coming to see me?" he asked.

"N-no, sir," replied Bullen, with a slight embarrassment of manner.

"You are not going fishing to-day, Brand?" he continued, glancing at the signet ring and malacca cane.

"Not this morning; but I shall be out on the river this afternoon. We are just strolling round for a chat and a smoke; and I am going to show this lazy beggar where I catch the eels he's so fond of. It's down by the south-east corner of the Fort near where the river goes into the sea, not very far from your house, sir."

"If you take any good sea fish, Brand, I should be much obliged if you would let me have a dish. But I don't care for anything that comes out of the river, as you know."

Brand's eyes twinkled and the fragment of a smile hovered under his moustache.

"There are as good fish in that river as ever came out of the sea, and they give a great deal more sport than the sea fish. I could sell half a hundred-weight a day to the fellows in camp, if I had the time to catch them. They're wonderfully fond of fish, aren't they, Ben?"

His companion, who was lost in admiration of his friend's flow of speech, allowed his lips to widen into a grin of amusement as he replied—

"Ah, bor; you're right. They fare as if they couldn't live without Mr. Brand's fish, sir," he concluded, summoning up his courage to take a part in the conversation.

"What's the matter with the river fish," asked Owen.

"They have a muddy flavour," answered Rex.

"They don't all taste alike, sir; and if you take a drop of brandy with them you can't taste the mud in the least," said Brand, addressing himself to Davenport.

"I wish there was no such thing as brandy in the world," remarked Rex, as he drove on and left the old soldiers chuckling with amusement. They watched him out of sight before they continued their way.

"Why should you dislike its existence?"

"It is giving us no end of trouble with the troops. How those men in camp manage to get hold of it

puzzles us all. Men, who were perfectly sober before they came here, have been found quite overcome. Major Adamson is much annoyed and worried, as it sends so many men into the hospital tents, to say nothing of the guard-room."

"Why does it send them into hospital?"

"They are overcome and lie down to sleep where the sun falls upon them; then they have fever and liver."

"The supply should be stopped? Where do they get it?"

"That apparently is a mystery. Of course, some is taken at the canteen and some at the arrack shops in the bazaar; but we cannot find any cases of excessive drinking at either places. If the men have nothing more than they buy there, all I can say is, that they must have uncommonly weak heads, if they are upset to the extent Major Adamson reports!"

"What have you to do with it?"

"He has asked me to set a watch upon the men and on the places they frequent; but so far I can find out nothing—absolutely nothing."

CHAPTER VI.

"We have not met with much success so far," remarked Davenport, as he and Rex drove towards the contonment. "I suppose that the attraction to the soldiers is that nice little half-caste girl."

"Undoubtedly; Bullen encourages them for the girl's sake, and he enjoys the companionship of people of his own profession and nation. He and Brand are both popular in the camp. I see Brand with one or two of the men now and then down by the river, instructing them in the gentle craft."

"What can have become of my brother's letter to Miss Tregethin?" asked Owen.

"If it came, it must have been stopped in the post-office here by one of the clerks. Why not write yourself to the address? Tell her of Mrs. Myrtle's illness, and ask for an interview."

"So I will. Say nothing to your head constable, and we will see what happens."

Rex touched up the mare with his whip. They were halfway between the town and the contonment, and had just come in sight of a small party of gipsies, who were hurrying their laden animals toward the camp. Rex overtook them just before they reached the tents. He pulled up sharply, and his horse-keeper, at a sign from his master, ran to

the mare's head. At sight of the Lumbadees the police officer had come to a sudden decision.

"Get down, Owen; this is an opportunity not to be lost. I shall catch the scoundrels red-handed. Unless I am very much mistaken, they are carrying smuggled liquor to the camp."

As he spoke he jumped out of the cart, followed by his friend. The gipsies endeavoured to hurry their bullocks forwards, but Rex placed himself in front of the frightened animals.

"Now then, my men, let me see what you have got in your packs," he said in Tamil.

Placing their hands together they began to whine in chorus—

"Sir! sir! We are poor men only, and we are carrying cotton for the English soldiers to make pillows in their camp. Please excuse, and let us go on; we are in a hurry."

"First let me look at the cotton," said Rex; his voice was even and good tempered, but had a tone of command in it.

A strong young gipsy took a step forward from the group, and constituted himself spokesman.

"If your honour will place a hand upon the bags, the cotton may be easily felt." He pushed his animal within reach of Rex.

"Open the bundle," was the reply.

"There is no time to open, your honour. The hour of the promised delivery of the cotton is already past, and we must hurry as fast as our

tired bullocks can go." There was an obstinate expression on the man's face as he spoke, and the words were uttered in a dogged tone of resistance, which roused the suspicion of the police officer still further.

"Unload this bullock and let me see what you are carrying besides cotton."

There was no movement to execute his orders on the part of the Lumbadees, who were watching their spokesman in sulky silence. Rex drew a knife from the pocket of his jacket, opened it before the gipsies were aware of his intentions, and severed the thongs which held the packs. As they fell to the ground there was a murmur of dismay, but none dared to interfere. Carwardine leaned over one of the bags of wool and ripped it from one end to the other. The white cotton, released from the confining pressure of the sack, fell away. Rex plunged his hand into the yielding mass and produced a bottle of French brandy. There were five more bottles concealed with the first.

"Caught at last!" he cried, as he grasped the arm of the young Lumbadee.

Without a word of warning the gipsy flung himself violently upon the police officer, who was overbalanced and thrown to the ground. Owen, ready for something of the sort, wrenched the infuriated Lumbadee away just as his fingers were about to close over Rex's throat. The Lumbadees looked

dangerous for a moment or two. Then one of the older men said something in gipsy language, and their expression changed as if by magic. Two of them laid restraining hands upon the rash assailant and held him whilst the old man spoke.

"Sir, it is all a mistake, and he has brought shame upon us by lifting his hand against the officer of the Sircar. Follow us now to the camp and hear what the sergeant has to say, to whom the cotton and the liquor have been sent."

"Bring that fellow along with you," replied Rex, as he brushed the dust from his uniform and got into the cart. "It is just possible that the sergeant may be able to clear these fellows of blame, but I shall have to punish that young firebrand," he remarked to Owen as they drove slowly on, followed by the Lumbades and their bullocks.

"Have you ever been attacked like that before?"

"Never; though I have been told that the tribe has been grumbling at the close supervision that I have lately enforced. My constables have been stopping them on the Pondicherry road; but somehow they have not been able to bring any charge against the Lumbadees that would make a case. I must let justice take its course against this young man. If I allow the assault to pass, they will take fresh courage and attack me in force one day, when they meet me alone in the district. One has to be very firm and just with a half-tamed people like these."

On arrival at the camp the canteen sergeant was summoned to explain the situation.

"Are you expecting any wool to make pillows for the men?" asked Carwardine.

The sergeant glanced from Rex to the gipsies at a loss for an answer. As his eye caught sight of the bottles of brandy, the colour mounted to his brow. The old Lumbadee pressed forward and handed him a paper. His brow cleared as he read its contents.

"I am expecting some brandy, sir; six dozen for the canteen. I see that the coolies have had an accident with one of their packs. I hope there are no bottles broken."

Rex was slightly taken aback. "Where is the invoice?"

The sergeant went into the tent, and returned with a paper which he tendered to the police officer. It purported to be an invoice from a native shopkeeper in Madras, advising the despatch of six dozen bottles of brandy as directed.

"I think you will find it all right," said the sergeant. "I can show you the order signed by Major Adamson."

"If the liquor comes from Madras, and the major knows all about it, I need not do anything more. I felt sure, when the men would not tell me what they were carrying, that they were smuggling something from French territory. Why do you have it up from Madras in this way? Surely it

would be quicker and cheaper to send it by rail."

"We have so many breakages by rail when ordering from these native merchants. They don't know how to pack. It takes a little longer, but it is just as cheap to get it up by the Lumbadees. The bottles are handed over to them without the trouble of packing; they bring them in their own way, usually packed in cotton like this, and we have never lost a bottle. I give them a trifle for the cotton-wool, as the men are glad to have it for pillows."

Rex looked at the gipsies, whose faces were losing the sulky look with which they had been overcast.

"You were stupid fellows not to tell me what you were carrying. All this trouble might have been saved if you had but spoken. You can go, but I shall bring that man before the magistrate for his violence. A few weeks in jail will be a lesson to him."

The gipsy was handed over to two police peons, who were on duty near the camp, with directions to take him to the police-station. Rex and his friend drove away quickly, as it was nearly lunch-time.

The sergeant smiled, and then winked at the retreating cart. "A bit too hasty, young man; you won't catch them like that," was his apostrophe, as he gazed at the sun-lit cloud of dust that covered their retreat. Then he turned to the

Lumbadees, who were busy turning out the contents of the packs, and directed them to bring the brandy into the store-tent. With their assistance he packed it at the bottom of a large wooden case. Paying the old Lumbadee for the transport, he dismissed the men. As soon as they had departed, he hastily placed the cotton over the brandy. On the top of the cotton he put a layer of empty soda-water bottles. When Major Adamson looked into the tent the next morning, he saw nothing but a case half full of empties waiting to be refilled by Corporal Barnes, who worked the soda-water machine.

CHAPTER VII.

The time flew by quickly and pleasantly for Owen. Oriental life was new to him, and he found it full of fascinations. Following the advice of his friend, he went the round of the station, paying calls which resulted in a shower of invitations to tennis and dinner parties. Since he was the guest of her fiance, Marion Hensley was especially gracious, and scarcely a day passed that he did not find himself at the Garden House, as Mr. Hensley's residence was called. Frequently, when Rex was detained by his work, he sent Owen off to make excuses for himself, and to amuse and be amused. His proxy proved sufficiently entertaining, and Miron uttered no reproaches when her busy lover appeared late in the day and apologetic.

The visitors were still staying at the Garden House, and Owen was soon on good terms with the two German entomologists. They were all more or less idle men whose time was their own, and they were thus thrown together. The story of the lost heiress interested them, and they tendered much advice to the searcher, who submitted it all to Mirion Hensley. They were particularly urgent that he should pay a visit to the mine and offered to accompany him there.

Rex was absorbed in his work. The trouble with the troops was not solved; on the contrary, it increased day by day rather than lessened. As the Lumbadees had appeared in numbers with the arrival of the men in camp, he drew his own inference from the coincidence. Before the white tents sprang up on the maidan Cuddalore was only visited now and then by the gipsies, and then they came by twos and threes. Now he heard of gangs of eighteen and twenty coming and going with frequency. He gave repeated orders to his subordinates concerning the necessity of watching them and their transport cattle; but his men failed to lay their hands upon a single case of smuggling liquor into camp.

There is no one in the world so subject to occasional attacks of blindness as the police peon of India. His natural instincts caused him to regard smuggling with lenient eyes. It is difficult to persuade him that it has anything to do with dishonesty. From the head constable downwards, the carriage of contraband goods is placed in the category of such minor offences as drunkenness, trespassing, and carrying no light on the road after dark with a bullock-cart. Hence the anxiety of the police officer to catch the gipsies himself, and hence also his determination to prosecute the Lumbadee who had made the attack. His action had an unexpected result.

The morning following the arrest, a lame gipsy

woman presented herself at the office and begged for an interview. As soon as she was admitted, she fell at the feet of the police officer and implored his mercy. Gradually Rex gathered that she was the mother of the man who was in trouble. She was too old to work and too lame to follow the transport gangs. Her daughter lived with her, and her son supported her. If he was sent to prison they would both starve. But she begged in vain. Rex was firm in his determination to punish the man, and it was not without some difficulty that he got rid of the suppliant. He was sorry for her, but he would not allow his pity to interfere with his duty.

Before he left the office he called Soobarow into his room and spoke to him about the necessity of taking decisive action with the Lumbadees. The head constable listened deferentially.

"Why is your honour so anxious to convict?" he asked. "The Lumbadees will go as suddenly as they came, and for years we shall have no further trouble."

Rex glanced sharply in his face, but read nothing. His reply had a touch of impatience in it.

"You know the reason as well as I do, Soobarow. The soldiers in camp are undoubtedly obtaining spirit through their assistance, and the men disgrace themselves by their excesses."

"If the gipsies carry the liquor across the boundary they should be stopped by the officers

of the custom-house. It is impossible to catch them here."

"Why should it be so!" asked Rex.

"Because there are people more clever than the gipsies at the back of the business. The Lumbadees are but tools," was the reply.

"Can you find out how the liquor is carried into the camp?"

Soobarow remained silent a few seconds. "It might be possible to discover it. Your honour would prosecute the receivers of course?"

"I should put the matter into the hands of the commanding officer, if I found that a soldier was implicated. It is against the rules to bring liquor into the camp except that which goes to the canteen and the mess. A man caught breaking the rule is liable to heavy punishment."

"It is a difficult task that your honour has set us to do. The crow is a cunning bird, but it is ill adapted to trapping the kite. The British soldier has a keener vision than the kite, where strong drink is concerned. But with your honour's permission, I and my men will do our best to find out where the leakage is."

"It means reward and promotion, remember. The youngest man in the force shall step over his seniors if he can put me on the right scent."

As he ceased speaking there was a sound of creaking boots outside the door and Naga entered with a note for his master.

"Here, Naga, take the office-box back to the bungalow, and tell the butler to prepare some dinner for me," Rex said, as he placed his helmet upon his head. He sighed a little wearily. There was a couple of hours' work in those papers, which the peon was carrying home. It meant that he would be unable to accompany his guest to a friend's house where they were to have dined.

When Davenport started, Rex sent a message to say that he would look in after dinner to apologize for his enforced absence.

Nine o'clock struck, and the police officer was ready to walk to his destination. The light of a young moon, which was dropping towards its setting, made a lantern unnecessary. The servants had gone to their suppers behind the bungalow, and he was alone. He heard the swish of drapery and a footfall upon the steps of the verandah.

"Who is there?" he asked in Tamil.

A figure draped in a blue Lumbadee cloth came out of the dim moonlight, and placed herself in an attitude of supplication before him.

Behind her stood a large, grey Lumbadee dog, which sniffed the air and watched the Englishman with observant eyes.

"Sir! I come to ask mercy," cried the woman, in the language of the country. Her voice was gentle and denoted youth. "I ask mercy for my brother. My mother is heart-broken. Never has her son been in trouble. Ah! sir! you do not know

how good he has been to her, and how hard he has worked to keep her in comfort! Be merciful and forgive."

As she spoke she raised herself into a kneeling posture and lifted her face to his. The light from the lamp fell full upon it, and he had an opportunity of studying the regular features. Her dark eyes looked appealingly into his. She clasped her hands together and pleaded the cause of her brother with still greater earnestness, whilst he stood silently regarding her. At length he said—

"I am sorry that I cannot grant your request. As I told your mother, I could not let your brother escape punishment. It is a serious offence to interfere with a servant of Government in the execution of his duty."

"I know! I know! You speak but the truth, sir! He was wrong, and deserves punishment. But, for my mother's sake, be merciful."

CHAPTER VIII.

Daisy Bullen was in the verandah of her father's house. On the floor sat a dirzee, his back against the wall, a large sheet spread in front of him, and laid out with patterns, materials, pins, scissors, and a six-months' old fashion-book that smelt strongly of smoke. The tailor was putting his whole soul into the creation of a ball-dress, and Daisy was superintending. It was her first ball-dress, and it was to be a diaphanous dream of white grenadine and pink roses.

The sergeants and corporals of the camp had decided to give a dance. When Corporal Barnes brought the two tickets, he explained that he had only those at his disposal. He expressed a warm hope that Mr. and Miss Bullen would accept the invitation. Mrs. Bullen was quite content to be omitted. Loyal as she was to her husband's nation, she would have hesitated to appear at a sergeants' ball under any circumstances. If the occasion demanded the adoption of evening dress, her hesitation would have merged into a firm refusal.

But though she was not going herself, she took the keenest pride in her daughter's dress. Bullen had told her that no reasonable expense was to be spared, as probably Mr. Barnes would have some-

thing to say to Daisy that evening. "Just let the girl look her very best, Molly mor. When my sister was married, I remember my mother made everything in the house, and lor! you couldn't have told but what the dress came from the best shop in Beccles."

Mrs. Bullen had had the standard of the unknown mother-in-law held before her eyes all her married life. She never dared to hope that she could emulate her husband's mother. But she never ceased from endeavouring to imitate all the virtues that Bullen declared graced his parent. She did her best with the patient humility of the oriental woman, and was supremely happy when her husband told her that his own mother could not have done better. She spent the whole of one day in the bazaar, bargaining with the native hawker over the material, and the half of another in the purchase of the pink roses. Then came the hiring of the tailor, who wanted to make it a contract job, carried out at his own house. This proposal brought forth a voluble outpouring on the part of Mrs. Bullen concerning the folly of all such arrangements where cutting-out had to be done and material might be stolen. In the end, the tailor was engaged to come by the day and work under the eye of Miss Bullen.

Whenever her daughter appeared in the kitchen or back verandah to offer her customary help in the house work, Mrs. Bullen sent her back to the dirzee with—

"Now, Daisy girl, you just leave that for the tanniketch to do. You go and look after that man. Oh my! if you don't watch him every minute of the day, he will be cutting your dress all wrong and stealing half the stuff."

So Daisy, nothing loth, was living in the front verandah, now on a chair facing the tailor, now on her knees helping him to pin crumpled, much-worn patterns to unmanageable grenadine. The dirzee, far from being annoyed by the supervision, was full of happy importance at being the centre of her attention, and was endeavouring to break his record in the matter of "barl-dress, only."

"Shall I put a yem on the beyind? or shall I put farlse peese only?" he inquired, as he held up the train of the unfinished skirt for Daisy's inspection.

As she was concentrating her mind on the important point, and hesitating between the mysterious "yem" and "farlse peese," her small brother Jimmy came into the verandah. The interest in Daisy's dress was not confined to herself and her parents. It spread through the whole household, extending to the two servants, the kitchen woman and the scullion, a merry lanky scamp, whose ambition was to be cook in the judge's house. Even the appa woman, who brought the rice cakes every morning, once ventured under the wing of the tanniketch to peep at the dirzee from behind the door with exclamations

of wonder and admiration. The children paid many visits, having more time at their disposal than those members of the establishment who were engaged in the various duties which had to be performed in the cook-room and its vicinity. Jimmy, under pretence of requiring assistance in the buckling of his school satchel, ventured to the very border of the sheet.

"Now, look where you are going, Jimmee boy!" exclaimed Daisy, as she glanced apprehensively at his dusty shoes.

"Oh! that is pretty! Daisy, you will look like a fairy-queen. And mamma says there will be a beautiful supper. My! I should like to go! You will bring me something in your parket, won't you?" he concluded, in a wheedling tone.

"Hark at you, Jimmee boy! Why do you say parket like a native? Say porket; that's how Mr. Barnes speaks. Oh my! there's the clock striking. You are late for afternoon school, and the school-master will beat you. Run, Jimmy boy! run!" she cried, as she fastened the strap and ridded herself of the interruption. Falling on her knees to obtain closer vision, she once more centred her thoughts on the "yem" question. Before she could come to a decision her mind was once more diverted. This time it was the distant creaking of boots.

CHAPTER IX.

On arrival at the pier-head Rex paid the boatmen, hired a gharry, and drove to the club where he was staying. He had taken five days' casual leave, three of which were gone. The other two slipped by all too fast, and on the evening of the fifth he travelled up to Cuddalore by the night train.

The next morning found him absorbed in his work, which fortunately was always interesting, so much so, that it was a rare thing for him to take any leave. As usual with his temperament, the day passed without any temptation to indulge in vain regrets. By the broad light of the sun, aided by reason, he determined to forget the gipsy girl, and when the summer came he would go home and marry Marion, who was in every way suitable for the wife of a Government official. But at night, when the work of the office was put aside, his thoughts were not so easily controlled. He fought bravely against memory the first evening after his arrival home. On the second he was less severe with himself. He yielded to temptation, and wandered through the gateway of his compound. Instinctively he bent his steps towards the spot

where he had recovered consciousness after the attack by the dogs.

All was quiet, except for the murmur of the sea, the chirp of the grasshoppers, and the cry of the stray sea-bird. He looked towards the moat, and wondered if the boat was still lying amid stream. He felt inclined to ferry himself up to "my lady's bower," but dismissed the thought as being foolish, considering that he had no light. To-morrow he would see Brand, and ask if he would sell him the fittings of the chamber; his desire was that the room might be left intact. Then he wondered idly whether the girl had taken any active part in the smuggling which had been going on. He came to the conclusion that she had had no share in it. Her crime consisted in screening the criminals. And therein he was right. Brand's peculiar sense of honour would have been sufficient guard against "her ladyship" being involved in any difficulty of that kind. Though the old man had taken care that she was never without a flask of the very best cognac, in case of need, he had never allowed either her dwelling or her own person to afford any aid in the contraband traffic.

The identification of the Dilys on board the Golcondah, the Miss Tregethin of the hidden chamber, and the gipsy girl of the glaxis, was a dangerously fascinating occupation for thoughts that refused to be controlled. In which character had she been most charming? There was no doubt

about the answer. It was as the gipsy that she had shown her softest moods, when she pleaded in vain for her foster-brother, standing under the wheels of his dog-cart, and when she bound his arm ith gentle touch and tender pity.

Yet the memory was not without its bitterness. She had so manifestly played with him and amused herself. Now she had thrown him aside, and turned with the irresponsibility of a child to a new toy, in the shape of his friend Owen. The hot blood flew to his face as the conviction forced itself upon him, that her treatment of him was no more than he deserved. It would only have complicated matter had she showed herself to be serious in her coquetry. He laughed, as the thought struck him, that it would have been odd if he had appropriated the heiress whom Owen had come out to India to seek and to marry. His laugh was echoed behind him in light, mocking tones. He started visibly, bewildered, incredulous.

"Looking for the gipsy girl, Mr. Carwardine?" asked a well-remembered voice, ringing with suppressed merriment.

He caught his breath, believing for a moment that imagination was playing him a trick. But it was no trick. There in the starlight stood the gipsy girl, her eyes shining with mischief and delight, in her maddest, merriest, most fascinating mood. She was robed in the folds of a gipsy cloth, but her face and hands were unstained. The

English skin showed pearly white in the starlight, and the colour that lives only in the cheek of the European mounted to her very brow.

Neither was it a trick of the fancy that filled in the next five minutes.

"How did you come here?" he asked presently, wonderment betraying itself in his voice.

"Do the girls in England leave the men they love when there is no need? No, a thousand times, no! If you tell me that they do, I will not believe you. Does Miss Hensley leave the man she loves when she sails on the broad ocean? No, a thousand times no! She takes him with her. Ah! Pearl of my heart," she cried, dropping into the endearments which she had learnt in her babyhood from her foster-mother. "Have no fear that the gods are working ill. You are mine, mine alone, and no one will dispute my right, least of all the couple sailing on the Golconda."

He listened, scarcely daring to believe his ears.

"Tell me, how did you manage to leave the ship? Surely I saw you on board, you and your chair."

She laughed with the glee of a mischievous child.

"Quite right! You saw me and my chair. I thought that the chair would be a sufficient blind, if the suspicion should cross their minds that I might play them the same trick that I played my aunt. But they were so absorbed in each other that I need not have troubled. It was all disap-

pointly easy with the help of Mr. Brand and his old servant."

"So he befriended you once again."

"And will do so to the end. But imagine the scene there must have been when I was first missed. The dear Beast would think that I had jumped overboard. Oh! I do hope they stopped the ship to look for me! Then they would search more closely in the cabin, and discover that I had given my berth to a poor governess from Bangalore, who was longing, just longing, to go back to England, but had not the means. Mr. Brand had the ticket transferred that very morning by the agents. Then, some time after that, they would find my letter, which I hid under the pillow in berth 122. It is to Marion, and I have told her the truth, which she is to remember every time that she looks upon my empty chair."

"And what is the truth, beloved?" he whispered.

"Light of my eyes! can you not read it for yourself? It is the same story that Mr. Davenport reads every time he looks in Marion's eyes."

* * * * *

Three months later, when letters had been exchanged and explanations offered—which need not be set down here—a wedding took place at St. John's, Bangalore. It was in no respect what might be termed a society function, and on that account, perhaps, no record was made of the num-

ber of bridesmaids, nor of the presents, nor of the dresses worn on the occasion. Yet the bride was young, beautiful, and wealthy, and the bridegroom held a responsible position in the Indian Police Force.

After the ceremony there was a reception in the garden of the little bungalow standing on the edge of the plateau. The golden sunlight and quivering blue haze still glorified the wide expanse of boulders, cactus and green fields in that region of perpetual summer.

The wedding party was not large, but it included a strange gathering of guests. Conspicuous amongst them was Mrs. Myrtle, lately arrived with her husband from England. She wore a magnificent toilette, which reflected dignity and honour upon the bride. She was her nearest relative, and though aged and enfeebled by a long illness, she was beaming with happiness. Her triumph in having found her niece, and her pride in the marriage, gave her new life. She was consoled by the thought that the strange caprice and wilfulness of her niece—all the result of her brother's folly in trusting his daughter to the care of a wild tribe of gipsies—might have led to disastrous results.

Another guest, less apparent, but none the less joyful, was an old, lame gipsy woman, tearful and smiling, apologetic and affectionate, proud yet humble, who remained in the back verandah or hovered round the door of the bride's dressing-

room. Occasionally she was overcome by fits of intense shyness, when she took refuge behind the portly person of Mrs. Bullen, whom she addressed as Raneë, much to that lady's gratification.

Mrs. Bullen, in a new silk cloth and purple satin skirt, was resplendent with jewels. Not content with her own, she had borrowed right and left, until her ample person was a pyramid of "barbaric pearl and gold." A seat of honour had been provided for her in the little drawing-room, from whence at a distance she could watch the festivities in the garden. When the wedding cake was out she was not forgotten, and a cup of fragrant coffee took the place of champagne. Daisy, smiling and happy in a white silk dress, far exceeding in splendour the "barl-dress" of grenadine, acted the part of bridesmaid. She played her part with grace, and many ejaculations of "Oh! my! now," when she was called upon to hold the gloves and bouquet of the bride. Poor little Daisy had not been without her share of trouble. The sudden departure of the regiment prevented Barnes from paying the momentous visit, which was to have been made the morning after the ball. Then came rumours of Moplah obstinacy and fanaticism, with the death of one or two men in the corps. Sleepless nights were passed, and many tears were shed whilst Bullen in his old age looked on at a new aspect of war which had never before been presented to his view. "That fare a harder job to

have to sit here and listen to her sobs than ever that was to hear the bullets a-whizzing about my head," he confided to Brand. But the clouds rolled by in a few weeks. Order was restored amongst the Moplahs, and the regiment returned to Bangalore. Bullen, at Brand's suggestion, followed it. The young Bullens were requiring a better school than Cuddalore offered, and Daisy's happiness hung on the renewal of relations with the gallant corporal, now promoted to be sergeant.

Foremost in the revels was the host, John Elton Brand, Esq., who also played the part of "father" to the bride. A black frock coat, a pair of grey trousers, and a silk hat made him a formidable rival in appearance to the bridegroom himself. When he was first asked to take such an important part in the ceremony, the old man was overwhelmed with pride and modesty. Mr. Myrtle was the proper person, he said, to fill that position. But that complacent individual was more than content to waive all right to the honour; and when the bride renewed her request, Brand was almost moved to tears.

"After being such a traitor! Your ladyship is too kind!"

With glistening eye he at length consented, and having done so he realized that he was about to arrive at the proudest moment of his life.

In behaviour and courtliness of manner John Elton Brand, Esq., surpassed himself, whilst his

faithful factotum, Ramaswamy, in a turban that looked like an abnormally large turnip, excelled all past efforts in the serving of champagne and cake.

The company had gathered round the bride with brimming glasses, waiting for the toast. Brand stepped forward, glass in hand to give it. He spoke affectionately, but deferentially of her ladyship, and expressed his satisfaction in seeing how her friends had rallied round her. Whilst he spoke he rested one hand on his hip, pushing aside the frock coat, so that the grey trousers might be brought into view in all their splendour. In the other hand he held his glass of champagne, which now and then he raised, and gracefully waved before him to emphasize his words.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he concluded, "I am am going to ask you to drink the health of the bride and bridegroom in this excellent champagne—it is not Lumbadee borne, sir, I assure you;" this as an aside to the bridegroom. "I must remind you, ladies and gentlemen, that when we give our love and friendship to a lady, we give it also to those whom she may love. There is no knowing with the fair sex how strange the objects of their love may be; but whatever they are, as men and gentlemen, we are bound to respect their choice. Her ladyship has chosen the police. From henceforth we must follow the police, and work with, and not against, the arm of the law. I ask

you all to drink to the happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Carwardine."

A chorus of cheers, led by Sergeant Barnes, followed the words, and under cover of the noise, Bullen turned to Daisy, who was thinking of a future similar ceremony which was drawing near, and said—

"Now, wasn't that a rare old masterpiece! What I always say about Mr. Brand is, that he is such a gentleman."

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